



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement of Response to Report by Head of Mission to Serbia and Montenegro

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 13, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We would like to join others in warmly welcoming Ambassador Massari to the Permanent Council for the first time. Thank you, Ambassador, for your very informative presentation today and for the very detailed report you gave at the Informal Briefing yesterday.

Your appearance at the Permanent Council comes at a very historic time for the OSCE region. Last week we welcomed the new State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. It is clear that the Mission, under your leadership, has been planning for this event and is prepared to offer its expertise in implementing the Constitutional Charter.

The task of creating new Constitutions and developing joint Ministries will be challenging, and we encourage the governments of Serbia and Montenegro to take full advantage of OSCE assistance and capabilities in this area. While much remains to be done, the governments of Serbia and Montenegro seem to be on the right track toward building a stable, democratic Union. We will look forward to hearing more from the Mission on the progress of implementation activities in the months ahead.

We are pleased that anti-trafficking programs will remain a Mission priority in 2003. We support the Mission's inter-departmental strategy to address the symptoms of trafficking and to identify ways to recognize and prevent it.

Regarding the recent trafficking case in Montenegro, we recall our statement to the Permanent Council last week, and again urge Montenegrin authorities to follow through on their commitment to bring to justice all those involved in the case.

Trafficking is just one of many regional problems that can best be addressed through increased cooperation among all OSCE states. On a regional level, we encourage increased collaboration among OSCE Presences. We support Ambassador Massari's goal to build confidence and increase dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade by working through the respective OSCE Missions.

Other issues that would benefit from a regional response include facilitating refugee returns, combating organized crime, and developing effective border management programs. In that regard, we support efforts to share information, coordinate programs, and build networks between OSCE Presences throughout the region.

On the issue of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), we commend the Mission's efforts to support domestic war crimes trials

and increase public awareness of the need for full ICTY compliance. There have been a few areas of improved cooperation, but many war crimes indictees remain at large in Serbia and Montenegro. We reiterate our call for full and unconditional compliance with ICTY obligations.

We have been carefully monitoring recent events in South Serbia and will continue to keep a watchful eye on the situation there. We commend those in South Serbia who have chosen to make democracy work by participating in government institutions and engaging in dialogue rather than resorting to violence. We support the Mission's plan to broaden its focus in South Serbia to include economic development and the further integration of minorities into democratic institutions.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our support for these goals and priorities of the OSCE Mission in Serbia and Montenegro. We again thank Ambassador Massari for your presentation and look forward to further progress and reports from the Mission in the months ahead. We hope that the excellent cooperation between the OSCE and the government of Serbia and Montenegro continues, as we pursue our mutual goals through the Mission's mandates.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.